

THE ESTUARIAL FLORA OF THE GODAVARY.

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(With a map and two plates).

INTRODUCTION.

Hooker (5) remarks: 'The four chief estuarial floras of India occupy the deltas of the *Ganges*, *Irrawady*, *Mahanady* and *Indus*; but minor ones, notably those of the *Kistna* and *Cauvery*, occur at intervals commonly along the eastern shores, more rarely on the Western.' The estuarial flora of the *Godavary*, which Hooker, however, omits to mention, consists of a number of mangroves with an undergrowth of perennial woody climbers, followed by the halophytes on the exposed mud-flats towards the landside.

The Lower *Godavary* branches into the *Vasista Godavary* and the *Gowtamy Godavary*, and the mangrove forests are the gifts of the latter (Cornwall, 2). These forests are situated on muddy flats formed owing to the silting activity of the *Gowtamy Godavary* for over a century and more, before it reaches the sea at *Coringa*, once called the *Coringa Bay*. (Plate I).

There is a sort of zonal distribution among the species of the mangrove forest. The pioneer species are *Avicennia alba* and *A. marina* which pave the way for the species of *Rhizophora*, *Bruguiera*, *Ceriops*, *Sonneratia*, etc. The species of *Lumnitzera*, *Aegiceras* and *Excoecaria* prefer shallower waters towards landside. Finally, the bare and the much-exposed regions are occupied by the halophytic *Chenopodiaceae*. The undergrowth of plants is made up of the spinous *Dalbergia*, the prickly *Caesalpinia* and the twiners, *Derris* and *Sarcolobus*. The network of the canals is lined by *Acanthus ilicifolius* and the tall grass *Myriostachya Wightiana* (Plates II & III).

As quite a number of details regarding many of the mangroves have been long ago given by the late Fr. Blatter (1) repetition will be avoided in the following description.

SYSTEMATIC ACCOUNT.

In the following list of twenty-six plants which have been arranged in their respective families I have as far as possible given their vernacular names, and have also added a few notes on their economic importance, even though these plants are mainly valuable to people of the localities as fuel.

I. RHIZOPHORACEAE.

1. *Rhizophora mucronata* Lamk., F.B.I., ii, 435.

Syn: *R. Candelaria* W. & A.

Vern. Names: Uppa-Ponna (Tel.); Kandal (Tam.).

Habit: A glabrous evergreen tree of the swamps buttressed by long stilt roots, forming more or less the outermost fringe of the vegetation towards the sea,